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THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

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There is no period in the history of the Kingdom of Israel more full of interest than the quarter-century which saw both its greatest prosperity and its destruction. It was not so long ago that for information on this period we were restricted to the Old Testament; but the literary monuments recovered from the palaces of the contemporary Assyrian kings have spoken with authority, and in their light we get a new view of the political movements in Palestine. It may be profitable in our study not only to trace the prosperity, the decline, and the fall of the kingdom as portrayed by both of these sources, but for the sake of clearness to give as well a chronological epitome with references to such biblical and Assyrian texts as bear on our study, and to follow this with a translation of these Assyrian texts.

I. THE PROSPERITY, THE DECLINE, AND THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM

Only once in Israelitish history did the Northern Kingdom rise to a prosperity comparable with that of the palmy days of the monarchy. Under Jeroboam II, the greatest of her kings, Israel's sway extended from the Lebanons to the border of Edom. The political movements of the century had worked favorably for Israel. As the power of Assyria revived, it was the Syrians who, being nearer to Assyria than the Israelites, first felt the presence of this formidable power. The Assyrian invasion of 797 B. C., and the five campaigns which followed it within half a century, so crippled the energies of her inveterate foe as to give Israel a long immunity from Syrian invasion and to leave her king, Jeroboam, free to restore his kingdom to the same compass as in the time of David. The future seemed to promise a long continuance of prosperity and peace. But beneath the prosperity and splendor and luxury, as Amos and Hosea declared, the deadly cancer of social and moral decay was eating into the nation's



HEAD OF SARGON II

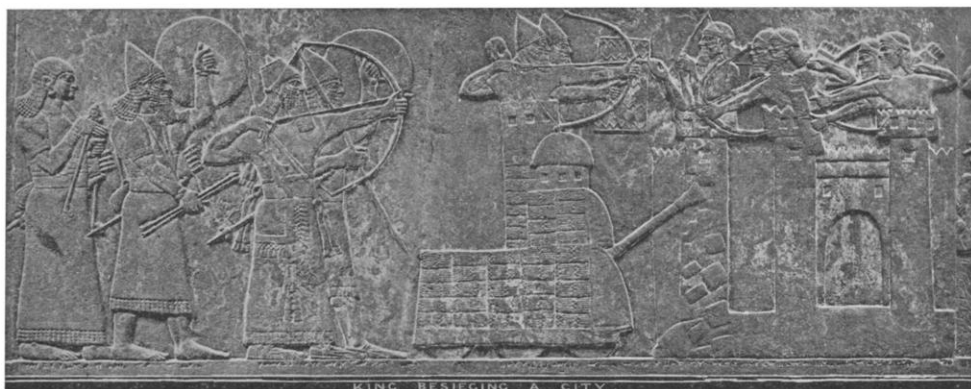
life. The death of Jeroboam in 740 B. C. ushered in the final act of the history. During the brief twenty years which remained of national existence the Israelite throne was the prize of a series of conspirators whose rivalries and misgovernment further aggravated the moral decay of the nation, and unfortunately gave the better opportunity for foreign intervention.

When in 745 B. C. Tiglath-pileser III (Pul) ascended the throne at Nineveh as the founder of the second Assyrian empire, he introduced a new thought into the world-politics of his day—one of which the statesmen and politicians of the West did not at first see the scope—the thought of a world-empire. Hitherto conquests had never been of a permanent character; even when tribute was imposed, it was generally discontinued upon the death of the ruler who had imposed it. Under Tiglath-pileser invasions ceased to be isolated invasions; they now had as their object the thorough subjugation of the invaded country. A king with unlimited ambition, Tiglath-pileser had military skill as well, and soon a well-trained and well-equipped army with which to bring his great gifts into effective action. Having made himself master of the East, he turned to Syria-Palestine. By 740 B. C. he had taken Arpad in Syria and had annexed Hamath to his empire. The fall of Arpad implied as well the seizure of the whole valley of the Orontes and the subjugation of the independent kings of Syria. Among the western princes who in 738 B. C. sent their tribute, Tiglath-pileser's *Annals* mention Rezin of Damascus, Hirom of Tyre, and even Menahem of Samaria. In this last-named prince we meet already Jeroboam's third successor. Jeroboam's son, Zechariah, after a six-months' reign, had perished. His assassin, Shallum, had reigned one month and had been killed by Menahem, who by the annual tribute of a thousand talents of silver bought the good-will and protection of Tiglath-pileser "to confirm his kingdom in his hand."

Menahem's act gave the Assyrian king a hold upon Israel which was never again to be relaxed, and cost his son, Pekahiah, his life. Each year the resources of the land were drained to supply the heavy tribute, and each year the nation grew more restless under the unjust exaction. Although nothing was accomplished during the lifetime of the king who had called Assyria to his aid, and who held, as did

his son, Pekahiah, after him, that the only assurance of safety lay in submission to the great king of Nineveh, the strength of the anti-Assyrian party was growing apace. It found an energetic leader in Pekahiah's captain, Pekah, who headed an insurrection and slew the inefficient king.

Pekah and the anti-Assyrian party in Israel grasped the political situation. The two great world-powers of Assyria and Egypt were now face to face with only the petty states of Syria-Palestine lying between, and these Assyria was conquering and absorbing one by



one. If Damascus, Hamath and Arpad, Tyre and Sidon, Samaria and Jerusalem, Gath and Gaza, could all be brought shoulder to shoulder on the frontier of northern Syria the Assyrian advance might yet be turned back to the gates of Nineveh. But that never came to pass; the innate individualism and the petty jealousies of the little states brought the plan to nought. Rezin of Damascus indeed gladly joined Pekah, as did Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, and Gaza; but the other Syrian states stood aloof. Ahaz of Judah was pro-Assyrian and refused to enter the combination. The allies, recognizing that the only hope of successful resistance lay in the union of all, set about invading Judah and her dependency, Edom, with the intention of dethroning Ahaz and replacing him by a prince of their own choosing. In this crisis neither the Syrian party at Jerusalem nor the assurances of the prophet Isaiah deterred Ahaz from following Menahem in the short-sighted policy of invoking the potent aid of Tiglath-pileser.

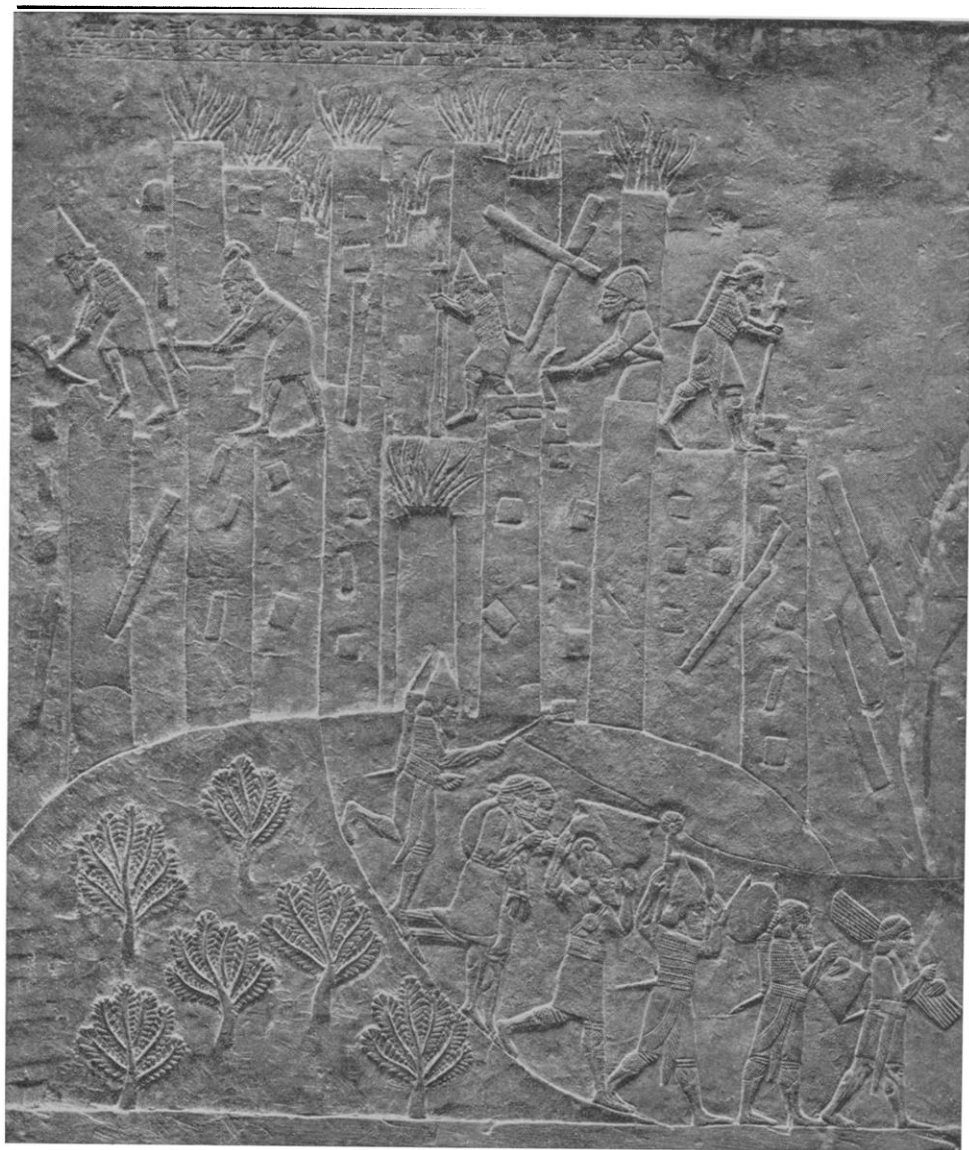
To Ahaz, it seemed to involve little more than the temporary payment of tribute. But by his act Ahaz not only made himself and his successors vassals of Assyria, but also, by thus helping the invader break down the remaining barriers between the armies of the Euphrates and the Nile, he hastened the day when his own land should become the battleground for Assyria and Egypt.

In 734 B. C. Tiglath-pileser appeared in the West; his *Annals* tell us of his victorious campaign. Damascus was put under siege, and after two years was captured. Rezin was slain, and the once mighty kingdom of Syria appeared thenceforth only as an Assyrian province. The people of Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Edom, and north Arabia were also punished.

In the meantime it had fared hard with Israel. The Assyrian army had swept north Israel and the territory east of the Jordan, and had taken "Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naph-tali, and carried them captive to Assyria." As city after city was taken and the Assyrian army drew near to the capital, King Pekah and the anti-Assyrian party lost their hold upon the popular imagination, and the king fell a victim to an Assyrian sympathizer, Hoshea, the son of Elah, who was allowed by Tiglath-pileser to occupy the throne of Israel on condition of vassalage. But what a pitifully crippled remnant Hoshea was to be king over! Zebulon and Naph-tali had been carried into captivity; two-thirds of the country had been annexed to Assyria, and there remained only the few square miles lying between the plain of Esdraelon on the north and the Judean frontier on the south, and the Jordan and the Mediterranean on the east and west respectively. The Kingdom of Israel had already received a death-blow; a few struggling gasps and the end came.

For six years Hoshea remained faithful to his suzerain, but upon the death of Tiglath-pileser in 727 B. C. he seemingly joined the general revolt. The dispatch of an Assyrian army into the west speedily brought him to his knees before his new overlord, Shalman-eser; but he was soon in revolt again.

In the olden days, the times of the Hebrew patriarchs, Egypt had been the mistress of Palestine and northern Syria, but with the death



of Rameses II, the Pharaoh of the oppression, the empire of the Nile began to crumble; the dependencies were lost, and the country was broken up into a number of mutually hostile principalities. Shabak, the Ethiopian conqueror, was now trying to fuse these little states into a new empire. Under this forceful and ambitious prince Egypt once more aspired to the position of a world-power. In view of the advancing power of Assyria, self-preservation demanded that she take an active interest in the affairs of Palestine; it was a matter of vital importance that the Assyrians should not establish themselves



on her northern frontier. To the restless Israelites Shabak¹ was ready to hold out specious promises of help; and, despite Egypt's evident weakness, there was a growing party in the Israelite capital, which urged throwing off the galling yoke of Assyria and reliance on the assured support of Egypt.

In 725 B. C. Hoshea, leaning on this bruised reed, broke his allegiance to the Assyrians. Since no historical inscriptions of Shalmaneser have as yet been recovered, we are dependent for our information as to what the Assyrian king did in this crisis upon the Book of Kings. It would seem that Shalmaneser, acting with promptness, marched into Palestine, defeated Hoshea's puny force, and carried

¹ The king whom 2 Kings 17:4 speaks of as So, but whose name might be more correctly vocalized *Sewe* (cf. Assyrian *Sib'u*), is probably to be identified with this Egyptian Shabak. Winckler finds here a reference to a prince of the Arabian kingdom of *Mucri*.

him in chains to Nineveh. Hoshea's deluded followers obstinately held Samaria for three years, vainly hoping for Egypt's promised help. By 723 B. C. the doom of the besieged capital had become so apparent that Isaiah and Micah announced to their Judean hearers its speedy fall. In spite of the fine military position of Samaria, it was a hopeless defense; for the investing forces, holding all the fruitful land about the city, at length starved it into submission. As for Egypt, her army did not appear in Palestine until a year or more later, when it met overwhelming defeat at Raphia.

Shalmaneser had died during the prolonged siege and had been succeeded by Sargon II; to him Samaria surrendered early in 721 B. C. Sargon's *Annals*, *Great Khorsabad Inscription*, and *Cylinder Inscription* throw much light on Israel's fate. Twenty-seven thousand and more of the inhabitants were carried off; these were settled in "Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." Later on Sargon "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel." To these Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal (Osnapper) added further colonists from the people they subjected in the East; cf. Ezra 4:2, 9, 10.

The foreign element thus introduced soon changed the character of the remnant of the Israelites left in Samaria; and, as for those carried into the east in this deportation and that under Tiglath-pileser, they likewise were in time absorbed by the people among whom they had been colonized. Thus the people of Israel, both those left at home and those carried into captivity, eventually lost their identity as a nation, and the Kingdom of Israel disappeared from the number of the nations of history.

II. CHRONOLOGICAL EPITOME WITH REFERENCES TO SUCH BIBLICAL AND ASSYRIAN TEXTS AS BEAR ON OUR STUDY²

740. Tiglath-pileser III (Pul), king of Assyria [745-727]. Arpad taken by Taglath-pileser [cf. Isa. 10:9].

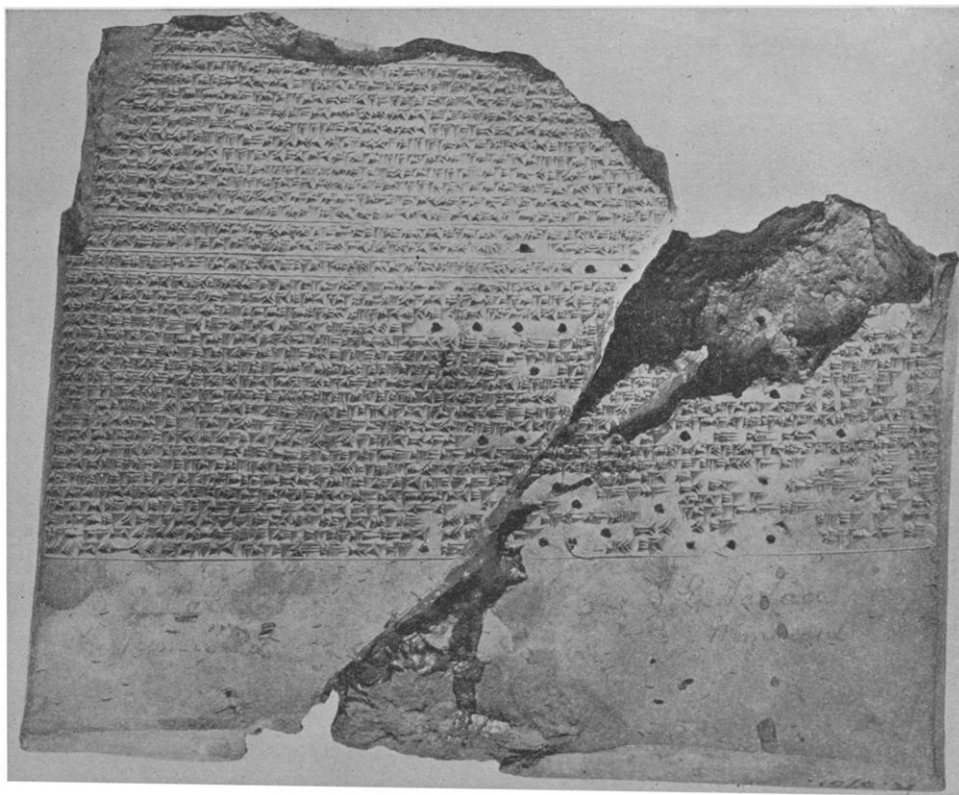
739. Hamath taken by the Assyrians [cf. Isa. 10:9].

² A translation of all the Assyrian material here referred to may be found in the pages following, and copies of the original cuneiform inscriptions in Botta, *Monuments de Ninive*; Layard, *Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character*; Lyon, *Keilschrifttexte Sargons*; Pinches, "The Babylonian Chronicle," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. XIX, Part 4; Rawlinson, *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, Vols. I-V; Rost, *Texte Tiglath-Pileasers III.*; Winckler, *Sargon II.*

738. Calno (Nippur) taken by the Assyrians [cf. Isa. 10:9]. Menahem of Israel and Rezin of Syria tribute-payers to Assyria [2 Kings 15:19; Tiglath-pileser's *Annals*; Rawlinson, III, 9, No. 3, 50-57; Rost, p. 7].

737. Death of Menahem of Israel and accession of Pekahiah [2 Kings 15:23].

735. Death of Pekahiah and usurpation of his throne by Pekah [2 Kings 15:25, 27]. Accession of Ahaz of Judah [2 Kings 15:38]. The plot of Rezin



CLAY TABLET OF TIGLATH-PILESER III

and Pekah to depose Ahaz and place on the throne a certain Ben-Tabeel [2 Kings 16:5; Isa. 7:6]. Ahaz calls upon Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for protection from his foes [2 Kings 16:7, 8; 2 Chron. 28:16].

734-732. Tiglath-pileser in Syria-Palestine. Syria devastated; Rezin besieged for two years in his capital city, Damascus [Layard, pp. 72 and 66; Rost, pp. 12-14]. North-Israel overrun; Tiglath-pileser in 734 B. C. "took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and

Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria" [2 Kings 15:29; cf. Isa. 9:1; Rawlinson, III, 10, No. 2, 12-19]. Moab and Ammon punished, as also the Philistines [Rawlinson, III, 10, No. 2, 19-22]. Tiglath-pileser again in Israel; King Pekah conspired against by his servants; assassinated by an Assyrian sympathizer, Hoshea the son of Elah, who is appointed by Tiglath-pileser to the vacant throne [2 Kings 15:30. Rawlinson, III, 10, No. 2, 26-30; Layard, p. 66, 17-19; Rost, pp. 14-37]. The Edomites punished. Samsi, queen of north Arabia, punished for taking part in the rebellion against Assyria [Rawlinson, III, 10, No. 2, 30 f.; Layard, p. 72, 16 f.].

732. Damascus, after a two-year siege, now stripped of her allies, falls. End of the Kingdom of Syria [2 Kings 16:9; Isa. 17:1]. Tiglath-pileser's court at Damascus; King Ahaz (Jehoahaz) of Judah among the numerous subject princes who gather there to do him obeisance [2 Kings 16:10. *The Nimroud Clay Inscription*: Rawlinson, II, 67, 57-62].

729. Tiglath-pileser ascends the throne of Babylon under the name of Pul ("Poros" of the Canon of Ptolemy).

727. Accession of Shalmaneser IV of Assyria.

727. Hoshea of Israel tributary to Assyria [2 Kings 17:3].

725. Hoshea conspires with Shabak (So) of Egypt and with Phœnicia to throw off the Assyrian yoke [2 Kings 17:4]. That the Phœnicians took part in the revolt is stated by Menander, quoted by Josephus [*Antiq. Jud.*, IX, xiv, 2]. Tyre was besieged for five years by Shalmaneser-Sargon [Isa., chap. 23; Sargon's *Cylinder Inscription*, 21: Rawlinson, I, 36; Lyon, p. 3; Winckler, p. 43].

724. Shalmaneser falls suddenly upon Hoshea and takes him prisoner. His capital, Samaria, placed under siege [2 Kings 17:4, 5].

721. Death of Shalmaneser and accession of Sargon. Fall of Samaria after a three-year siege and end of the Kingdom of Israel; Israelite captives, to the number of 27,290, deported and settled in "Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" [2 Kings 17:6, 23. *The Great Khorsabad Inscription*, 23-25: Botta, pp. 45, 1; Winckler, p. 30. Sargon's *Annals*, 10-17: Botta, pp. 79 and 70; Winckler, p. 1]. Later on, in 721, 715, etc., Sargon "brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Avva, and from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel" [2 Kings 17:24. *The Cylinder Inscription*, 17-20: Rawlinson, I, 36; Lyon, p. 3; Winckler, p. 43].

III. TRANSLATION OF SUCH ASSYRIAN MONUMENTS AS BEAR ON OUR STUDY

TIGLATH-PILESER III (745-727 B. C.)

The Annals

(Rawlinson, III, 9, No. 3)

⁵⁰Tribute of Kushtashpi of Kummuch, Rezin of Damascus, Menahem of Samaria, ⁵¹Hirom of Tyre, Sibittibi'il of Byblos, Urik of Que (i. e., Cilicia), Pisiris of Carchemish, Enilu ⁵²of Hamath, Panammu of Sam'al, Tarkhular of

Gamgum, Sulumal of Melid, Dadilu ⁵³of Kaska, Uassurme of Tabal, Ushkhitti of Tun, Uraballa of Tukhan, Tukhammi of Ishtund, ⁵⁴Urimmi of Khushimna, Zabibi the queen of Arabia: gold, silver, lead, iron, elephants' skin, ⁵⁵particolored garments, linen (?), violet wool, red-purple wool, terebinth (?) wood, oak (?) wood, everything costly, a royal treasure, fat sheep whose fleeces ⁵⁶were dyed red-purple, feathered birds of the heaven whose wings were dyed violet-purple, horses, mules, oxen, sheep, camels,⁵⁷ she-camels with their young, I received.

(Rawlinson, III. 10, No. 2)

¹². . . the city Khatarikka as far as Mt. Sau, ¹³. . . the cities Byblos, Tsimirra, Arqa, Zimarra ¹⁴. . . the cities Usnu, [Siannu], Ri'raba, Ri'sitsu ¹⁵. . . cities on the shore of the upper sea, I mastered. Six of my generals ¹⁶[as satraps over] them I appointed. The city Rashpuna on the shore of the upper sea ¹⁷. . . the city Gal' . . . the city Abilaqqa, which are on the border of the land of Beth-Omri (i. e., Israel) ¹⁸[the land of Naphta] li the wide-spread, throughout its extent unto the territory of Assyria I annexed. ¹⁹[My generals] as satraps over them I appointed. Hanno of Gaza ²⁰fled before my arms and escaped to Egypt. Gaza ²¹[I took; his goods], his treasures, his gods [I carried off] . . . My royal couch ²². . . in the midst of the palace [of Hanno I set up], etc. ²⁶. . . The land of Beth-Omri ²⁷. . . all of its inhabitants ²⁸[their goods] to Assyria I deported. Pekah, their king, they slew and Hoshea ²⁹[unto the lordship] over them I appointed. Ten talents of gold, . . . talents of silver [their heavy treasure] I received from them. ³⁰[To Assyria I de]ported them. Samsi, the queen of Arabia . . . ³¹. . . I killed, 1,100 people, 30,000 camels, 20,00 oxen . . . ³²5,000 bundles (?) of herbs, 11 sacrifice cups (?), the possession of her gods . . . ³³Her property I took from her and she herself to save her life . . . ³⁴[to the city] Bazil, a place of thirst, like a wild she-ass . . . ³⁵. . . famine overtook the people in the midst of their camp.³⁶ Before my mighty weapons she bowed and camels and she-camels ³⁷. . . before me she brought. An official I placed over her.

(Layard, pp. 72 and 76. Rost, Plates XXII and XXIII, pp. 12-14)

¹. . . his (i. e., Rezin's) warriors I captured . . . I overthrew with my weapons² . . . before him ³the charioteers and . . . their weapons I broke in pieces⁴ . . . their horses I seized . . . his warriors bearing bows . . . ⁵bearing shields and spears, with my hand I cast down and their battle-array⁶ . . . As for himself, to save his life, he fled away alone, and⁷ . . . like a mouse (?) his city gate he entered. His nobles alive ⁸[with my hand I seized]; on stakes I hung them up. I subjugated his land. Forty-five soldiers of the camp . . . ⁹[The gate] of his city I closed, and like a bird encaged I shut him in. His parks ¹⁰. . . fruit groves innumerable I cut down; a single one I did not leave¹¹ . . . Khadara, the house of the father of Rezin of Damascus,¹² [the place where] he was born, I besieged, I took. Eight hundred men together with their goods¹³ . . . their oxen, their sheep, I carried off. Seven hundred and fifty captives of the city Kurutsta¹⁴ . . . [captives] of the city Irma, five

hundred and fifty captives of the city Mituna I carried off. Five hundred and ninety-one cities¹⁵ . . . of sixteen districts of Damascus like a deluge I devastated. ¹⁶. . . Samsi, the queen of Arabia who the oath of Shamash had violated and . . . ¹the city . . . ²to the city Iza [si] . . . ³[from] Arabia in the territory of Sa [ba'] . . . ⁴in camp . . . ⁶she feared . . .

¹⁷[The land of Beth-Omri] all the cities I had [subjected] in my former campaign, and . . . had annexed [to the territory of Assyria] ¹⁸. . . whose . . . I carried off. Samaria they left alone and their king ¹⁹[they slew]

The Nimroud Clay-Inscription

(Rawlinson, II, 67)

[Tribute] of Kushtasphi of Kummukh, Urik of Que, Sibittibi'il of [Byblos], [En] ilu of Hamath, Panammu of Sam'al, Tarkhular of Gamgum, Su [lumal of Melid], . . . [Uas]surme of Tabal, Ushkitti of Tun, Urballa of Tukhan, Tukham[mi of Ishtund] . . . ⁶⁰[Ma]tanbi'il the Arvadite, Sanipu the Beth-Ammonite, Salmanu the Moabite . . . [Mi]tinti of Ashkelon, Jehoahaz of Judah, Quash-malak of Edom, Mus . . . [H] anno of Gaza: gold, silver, lead, iron, tin (?), parti-colored garments, linen (?), the red-purple clothing of their country . . . the product of sea and land, the possession of their country, a royal treasure, horses, mules, the team of a yoke . . . I received.

SARGON II (722-705 B. C.)

The Babylonian Chronicle

(*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, Vol. XIX, Part 4, pp. 655 f.; *Zeitschrift der Assyriologie*, 1887, pp. 148 f.)

I.²⁰ In the fifth year Shalmaneser died, in the month Tebet. ³⁰For five years Shalmaneser had ruled over Akkad and Assyria. ³¹In the month Tebet, on the twelfth day, Sargon sat on the throne of Assyria, ³²and in the month Nisan, Merodach Baladan sat on the throne of Babylon.

The Great Khorsabad Inscription

(Botta, pp. 145 f.; Winckler, pp. 30 f.)

²³From the beginning of my kingship until the fifteenth year of my reign I accomplished the defeat of Khumbanigash, the Elamite, in the suburb of Dur-ilu.

Samaria I besieged, I took. Twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and ninety of the people dwelling within it I carried off. Fifty chariots in their midst I collected, and the rest I allowed to keep their possessions. My satrap over them I appointed; the tribute of the former king ²⁵I laid upon them.

Hanno the king of Gaza, with Shabak the tartan of Egypt, had come out against me to the city Raphia to fight and join battle. Their defeat I accomplished. Shabak was afraid of the onset of my weapons and fled, and no trace of him was seen. Hanno the king of Gaza I took prisoner. ²⁷The tribute of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, Samsi the queen of Arabia, It'amara the Sabeian, gold, the products of the mountains, horses, camels, I received.

The Annals

(Botta, pp. 70, 71, 79; Winckler, pp. 1, 2)

¹⁰At the beginning of my kingship, in the first year of my reign¹¹ Samaria I besieged, I took (two lines lost). ¹⁵Twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and ninety of the people dwelling within it I carried off Fifty chariots, as my royal force, in their midst I collected The people of the lands, captured by my hands, in its (i. e., Samaria's) midst ¹⁷ I settled. My general I appointed over them as satrap; and tribute, a gift such as is usual with Assyria, I laid upon them. ²³In the second year of my reign Ilubi'di (called Jaubi'di in the *Khorsabad Inscription*) ²⁴ assembled his numerous [troops] at Karkar. The oath ²⁵ Arpad, Tsimirra, Damascus, Samaria [he incited to revolt] from me (some thirty or more signs have been lost here). Shabak (*Sib'u*) called his tartan to his aid. To fight²⁸ and join battle he came out against me. In the name of Ashur, my lord, his defeat I accomplished. Shabak, like a shepherd robbed of his sheep, fled away alone and made his escape. ³⁰Hanno with my hand I seized and led him bound to my city Ashur. Raphia I laid waste, I destroyed, I burned with fire. Nine thousand and thirty-three men together with their great treasure I carried off.

⁹⁴ of the land Que which Mitâ the king of Muski, had taken away, I captured, I carried off its booty. The people Tamud, [Iba]did, Marsima[n], Khaïap, the far-off Arbai who inhabit the deserts, whom no wise nor learned man knew, who had paid no (?) king their tribute, with the help of Ashur my lord I defeated them and their remnant I carried off and settled in Samaria. From Pharaoh, king of Egypt, Samsi, queen of Arabia, It'amra the Sabæan, the kings of the coast [lands] and the desert, I received gold, mountain-herbs (perhaps "products of the mountains"), precious stones, ivory, *ushu*-seed, spices of every sort, horses, camels as their tribute.

The Cylinder Inscription

(Rawlinson, I, 36; Lyon, p. 3; Winckler, p. 43)

¹⁷The exalted prince, who fought in the suburb of Dur-ilu, etc. . . . ¹⁹the overthrower of the widespread land of Beth-Omri (i. e., Israel), who at Raphia accomplished the overthrow of Egypt and carried off Hanno, the king of Gaza, his prisoner to Assyria. ²⁰The captor of the people of Tamud, Ibadid, Marsiman, Khaïap, the remainder of whom were deported and whom he settled in the land of Beth-Omri. ²¹The one mighty in battle, who drew the Jamnian out of the midst of the sea (*sandanish*?) like a fish and pacified Que and Tyre.